

WHY BRILLIANT MILITARY LEADERS FAIL: LEARNING FROM THEIR MISTAKES

BY

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LEARNING FROM THEIR MISTAKES**

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ABSTRACT

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In the first decade of the 21st Century, the military observed the firing or resignation of the Chief of Staff from Air Force, the Secretaries of Army and Air Force, plus several General Officers to include the Commander of Central Command. Naturally, the question is why did these smart and otherwise extremely successful senior leaders lose their jobs? We can learn from their experience and improve ourselves as leaders.

Success in modern war requires a keen ability to lead large, complex military organizations to tackle complex and often wicked problems. The commander will not be able to solve each and every problem, but to achieve victory, he must instill in his personnel an attitude and ability to learn and adapt to an ever-changing environment. Since the future will be volatile and uncertain, the leader must encourage a culture of adaptation coupled with an insatiable drive to win—a culture of innovation. Failure to achieve mission success as a result of organizational failure was a necessary, but not sufficient condition for leaders to be removed from their position. Only after these

leaders became disconnected from their boss(es) and demonstrated their inability to propose and enact a new strategy were they relieved.

WHY BRILLIANT MILITARY LEADERS FAIL: LEARNING FROM THEIR MISTAKES

In this first decade of the 21st Century, the military observed the firing or resignation of the Chief of Staff from Air Force, the Secretaries of Army and Air Force, plus several General Officers to include the Commander of Central Command. Naturally, the question is why did these brilliant and otherwise extremely successful senior leaders lose their job? Is there something we can learn from their experience to improve ourselves as leaders?

A well-known expression states we can learn more from our mistakes than our successes. Therefore, we may be able to learn a great deal from studying senior leaders and organizations who have failed. Based upon the number of books that appear on bookstore shelves from biographies to leadership books touting new techniques and examining many great leaders that have achieved success, I expected to also see some books examining failure. Unfortunately, books on leadership failure are rare, but through the study of historical cases much can be learned from leadership failure.¹

History tends to build monuments to past achievement and provide motivation for new members of an organization. Historians remind students that history is written by the victors. Thus, an historical analysis can be filled with a priori misconceptions. Additionally, immediate histories are typically biased and written without the perspective of time which provides additional details and perspectives.² Those immediate histories, such of those of S. L. A. Marshall's reports on Korea, are often written through capturing vicarious experiences of those who fought the war. Historians are thus left to their own

capacities to put these personal experiences into perspective for readers and to fill in the gaps with investigative work and often their imagination to fill in the missing details.³

Another source is a leader's personal notes or autobiographies. Personal memoirs of great leaders should not be read as fact, but rather as one perspective. Dr. Antulio Echevarria cautioned that "The memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant and Sir William Slim, though remarkably captivating, are ultimately no more reliable than human memory; both make use of facts, be they letters, dispatches, or something else. Yet, in the reconstruction—the narrative of events—memory fills in the gaps, and the gaps may be quite significant indeed."⁴

Does all this mean that the future leaders and commanders should discount the study of history and leadership? Quite the contrary, it is merely a caution that officers must view the past analytically rather than vicariously. The purpose of history is to enable leaders to develop higher-level critical thinking skills to overcome future enemies and events.⁵ History reminds us of the great responsibility that the nation places upon a military commander.

Many outside the military may wonder why we put so much focus on the senior commander and hold him or her accountable for all actions, success or failure, within their command. While a failure can be caused by an error of a junior officer or a systemic issue, military culture holds the commander or leader ultimately responsible for that happens within the command. A military commander is given the power to influence events and lives of service members more than a business executive can with employees—in part, it is legal authority reinforced by tradition.

Commanding large organizations with modern weapons, the generals today are far more powerful than the great captains of battle in history. As commanders rise in rank and responsibility, they no longer directly control the intricate dynamics of the battle.

There is a very great difference between the degree of control exercised by a Napoleon, who could oversee a whole battlefield and directly influence what was happening on it, and a modern military leader in charge of a campaign, much further from events and vulnerable to more varied forces as his command undertakes a great and protracted effort . . . His decisions are affected by the perceptions, demands, and requirements of others . . . For the modern commander is much more akin to the managing director of a large conglomerate enterprise than even he is to the warrior chief of old. He has become the head of a complex military organization, whose many branches he must oversee and on whose cooperation, assistance, and support he depends for his success.⁶

The commander cannot directly control the actions on the battlefield, but as the senior leader within a complex organization, he must establish the conditions and overall strategy for success.

History is rich with examples of the military commander charged with the responsibility of an Army and often the fate of a nation. “In the age of the heroic leader, the lone individual [e.g., Napoleon] could justly be awarded the victor’s trophy or suffer the ignominy of defeat. But modern war—like modern life—is a complex business.”⁷ Within the complexity of the modern battlefield, potential disaster can lurk at many levels.⁸ Yet, the military commander is responsible for establishing a command environment and ultimately responsible for all that happens under his or her command.⁹ Some authors refer to this as the “dogma of responsibility.”¹⁰

Military successes and failures figure prominently throughout history. Learning from these leadership failures through historical reflection requires a framework for analysis. In this light, this paper examines past military and corporate failures and

several academic frameworks to propose a new failure framework that addresses the typical causes of failure. A following section introduces several modern case studies to show the applicability of the framework. Finally, the concluding section gathers some observations and insights from past failures and proposes some methods to prevent future leadership failures.

Theory and Framework for Failure Analysis

From Clausewitz's *On War* . . . "Battles in which one unexpected factor has a major effect on the course of the whole . . . usually exist only in the stories told by people who want to explain away their defeats."¹¹ Dr. Eliot Cohen, a well-known writer, scholar, and defense policy analyst noted in, *Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War*, failure is typically not simply due to one type of error, shortcoming, or a simple error which causes the entire war or battle to be lost. Simple linear cause and effect assessments are inaccurate and do not reflect the complexity of war, and lack the ability to adequately explain military failure.¹² Instead, the failures are complex, involving several errors and factors. Nevertheless, like people and businesses, the military can suffer failure when it fails to learn otherwise obvious lessons. In studying leadership and what causes failures, there are commonalities with leadership failure in military organizations and corporations.

Examining failures in corporate America's large organizations can provide insights into military failures of similarly large and complex organizations. Sydney Finkelstein in *Why Smart Executives Fail and What You Can Learn from Their Mistakes* discussed the reasons why leaders in well-known companies like Motorola (Iridium), Rubbermaid, General Motors, Johnson & Johnson, Wang Labs, Samsung Motors,

Schwinn, and even the Boston Red Sox have met with dramatic failure.¹³ From the numerous theories of why a business leader fails, Finkelstein challenged the seven most common explanations cited for executive failure.¹⁴

1. **Executives Were Stupid:** The most common explanation, but are business failures really caused by stupidity or a lack of talent? Reality is CEOs (or 4-star generals) are almost always remarkably intelligent and had fantastic track records.
2. **Executives Couldn't Have Known What Was Coming:** In every failure investigated, executives had opportunities to foresee important changes. Executives had the facts and people attempted to inform them about the changing environment.
3. **Failure to Execute:**¹⁵ The explanation of "if managers and employees had only done their jobs better" sounds appealing, but is not the case. These companies were typically performing all sorts of operations brilliantly.
4. **Executives Weren't Trying Hard Enough:** Lower-level employees are apt to conclude that senior managers were asleep at the switch or weren't trying hard enough. Top executives or general officers work extraordinarily long hours and often stand to profit significantly from the organization's success.
5. **Executives Lacked Leadership Ability:** Most of the executives have strikingly forceful personalities with great charm and charisma. These leaders are impressive with their ability to lead and achieve success.

6. **Company Lacked the Necessary Resources:** Again, not the case, these companies typically had huge amounts of money and resources to use or lose.

7. **Executives Were Simply Greedy and Dishonest:** Other than a few spectacular scandals, the executives at these companies were amazingly honest.

While these explanations are convenient, Finkelstein held that they are clearly insufficient and do not help the reader to understand why businesses and their smart executives fail. Pundits and writers have cited similar explanations as the basis of military failure, but in nearly every case, these explanations prove to be incorrect or grossly insufficient.¹⁶ So, why do our brilliant general officers or America's smartest executives fail despite information and warnings that should alert them to the impending failure?

Dr. Finkelstein studied numerous failures in detail with access to executives involved in great business failures. The top seven reasons for failure can apply to business or military.¹⁷

SEVEN HABITS OF SPECTACULARLY UNSUCCESSFUL PEOPLE

1. See themselves and their forces as dominating the environment (arrogance/hubris)
2. No clear boundary between leader's personal interest and that of the Organization
3. Leaders who think they have all the answers
4. Leader who ensures everyone is 100% behind them, eliminating opposition
5. Leader who devotes the largest portion of their time to the unit's image
6. Underestimate major obstacles
7. Leader who revert to what worked for them in the past (yesterday's answer)

Figure 1.

As militaries typically reflect the society for which they fight, so do their reasons for failure. Interestingly, Dr. Cohen journeys through a similar search, discounting many similar explanations for military failure. His research points to three forces that commonly cause failure:¹⁸

1. Poor decisions by particular leaders
2. Organizational deficiencies
3. Unrecognized environmental changes

Dr. Cohen highlighted that individuals can be expected to occasionally miss indicators or repeat mistakes, but this should not occur in sophisticated and talented organizations with many brilliant individuals working together. In their collective minds and efforts, organizations have tremendous intellectual resources available and rich background of experiences.¹⁹ Thus, these types of mistakes should be avoidable. In analysis of military failures, he identified three fundamental failings within military organizations which can lead to catastrophes: failure to learn, to adapt, and to anticipate. These cognitive failures and organization factors are related and differ by one factor—time.

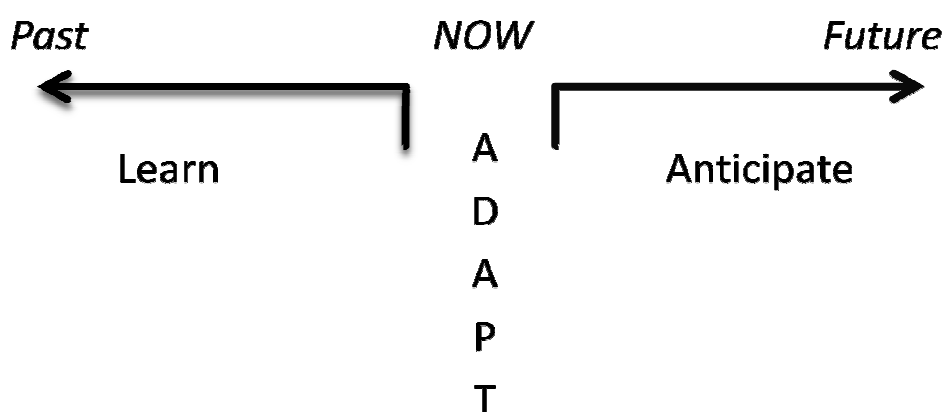


Figure 2. Cognitive Failures

Figure 1 graphically depicts Cohen's model of cognitive failure in the mind of the commander or within the extended mind of the organization that supports him. The *failure to learn* is a failure to recognize patterns and solutions to current problems based upon past events. The *failure to adapt* is a failure to rapidly adjust to unforeseen circumstances (e.g., "surprise" attack). Finally, the *failure to anticipate* is a failure of a commander and his staff use what they have learned about the past and current circumstances to peer into the future to predict the enemy's method of attack? A short historical example of each will illuminate Cohen's model.

Failure to Learn. An instructive example of failure to learn is the American antisubmarine warfare in 1942. In early 1942, German U-boats began to attack coastal shipping in the immediate vicinity of the United States. Over the next nine months, a tremendous amount of shipping, an average of 650,000 tons a month, was lost within a few hundred miles of the American coast.²⁰ The losses were so bad that it caused Captain Baker, the US Navy's chief expert in antisubmarine warfare, to comment "The Battle of the Atlantic is being lost."²¹ Unfortunately, the Navy failed to learn from the British experience of the need for a convoy system to protect merchant shipping. Yet, it was not until six months after the United States entered the war, May 1942, that the US Navy adapted and implemented coastal convoys. The failure occurred for many institutional and resource reasons, but at the base of the tremendous loss of shipping was a failure to learn from the experience of others (e.g., United Kingdom) that faced similar problems.

Failure to Adapt. Since not every situation or can be anticipated, the key is the organization's ability to adapt to rapid change and uncertainty.²² Dr. Cohen defines

adapting as, “identifying and taking full advantage of the opportunities offered by enemy actions or by chance combinations of circumstances to win success or to stave off failure.”²³ In the beginning of World War I military organizations did not typically encourage new techniques, flexibility, and innovation. The command environment of British Field Marshall Haig did not promote an environment conducive to innovation. He tolerated no criticism and accepted little advice, thus reinforcing systemic rigidity and demonstrating an inability to adapt.²⁴ Unfortunately, the results were a disastrous loss of life for the British and French.²⁵

Failure to Anticipate. A failure to anticipate is considered a failure to take precautions against disruptive or catastrophic failure.²⁶ Except in a tactical situation or single battle, the failure to anticipate rarely applies to a single commander. An incomplete and simple analysis attempts to explain a failure or place blame for a catastrophe upon one individual—the commander—who commits an unpardonable error in judgment.²⁷ A congressional inquiry into the Pearl Harbor attack placed the blame on Admiral Kimmel and Lieutenant General Short for not anticipating an air attack on Pearl Harbor and taking precautions. While this method of scapegoating is attractive, Dr. Cohen emphasizes these simple explanations fails to offer sufficient explanation for failure and is typical of those with “the most superficial of acquaintance with the past.”²⁸ More reasonable and complex explanations point to organizational blind spots and poor risk assessment which accumulates over time, resulting in strategic failure. Such risk was accepted (and not realized) in Korea in late 1950s, when President Truman, Gen MacArthur, and the Joint Chiefs did not believe the Chinese Communist forces would oppose the strength of the US and UN forces.²⁹

Typically, this type of failure is not the result of one leader, but a series of leaders and the failure of an organization over an extended period of time. For that reason, a failure to anticipate will not be a major part of the analysis of leadership failure.³⁰

While Cohen's framework provides some insight into failures, it does not explain all senior leader failures, particularly when the civilian leader and his military commander become disconnected. Dr. Peter Feaver's extension of *Agency Theory* to civil-military relations is based upon Principal-Agent theory and addresses many of the factors that cannot otherwise be explained by Cohen's or Finkelstein's failure models.³¹ Consider the problem of war aims and planning from principal-agent theory. The civilian principal knows what he wants done, but is to a degree limited by his knowledge of the agent's (military's) methods and means. Additionally, the agent typically has significantly more experience in defense and also has a major informational advantage over the civilian principal. The agent interprets the principal's direction and presents the principal a plan utilizing the agent's preferred way of business (war).

As the agent, the military leader may not share the same preferences as the civilian concerning policy questions. The military agent may attempt to manipulate the relationship and, to some degree, has the capability to influence decisions and policies. For example, the agent can claim he has not trained sufficiently in counterinsurgency operations, thus informing the principal that he cannot effectively accomplish a counterinsurgency mission without a significant risk to life and mission success. In principal-agency terms, this is called shirking responsibility.³² The military's decision whether to shirk a task or policy decision is shaped by how negatively the military leaders view the task.³³ If discovered, the civilian principal has some ability to control

the military agent's shirking. Unfortunately, the principal is at an information disadvantage in his ability to detect shirking and to know how to correct the task avoidance. Ultimately, the civilian principal can fire the military agent if he considers the shirking severe enough.

Combining Dr. Finkelstein's insights about corporate failure, Dr. Peter Feaver's application of Agency Theory, and Dr. Cohen's model of military failure yields a rich model which can explain why senior military leaders and organizations fail. The author proposes the following framework:

REASON #1: Incompetence or Moral Failure

REASON #2: Irreconcilable Vision--the Disconnected Senior Leader

REASON #3: Failure to achieve desired results (failure to learn or adapt)

This framework can provide some additional insights through some case studies.³⁴

Case Studies in Command Failure

Examining several case studies to include several recent instances can provide some insight into the causes of the failure of the senior military leader. The cases presented will examine general officers in command of organization with substantial responsibilities. While each case will typically focus upon one reason, rarely is failure attributable to only one reason. In those cases in which other reasons play a significant factor, they will be noted.

REASON #1: Incompetence or Moral Failure. The cases of incompetence and moral failure are typically rare for senior officers. As the United States Army shifted from a peacetime, bureaucratic Army in early World War II to an Army at war, both Generals Marshall and Eisenhower relieved several General Officers for failure to

perform under combat conditions.³⁵ Major General Fredendall was a prime example during the North Africa (Tunisia) campaign.

In March 1943, the US Army was still untested and was facing Rommel and Kesselring in North Africa, two battle-tested enemy leaders. Major General Fredendall thinly deployed his II Corps across a large front, contrary to Gen Eisenhower's orders, and vulnerable to a superior Axis force.³⁶ Maj Gen Fredendall's headquarters was located in a massive underground bunker some 65 miles behind the lines. A battalion of combat engineers, which had better use at the front line, had spent weeks constructing the enormous headquarters. After some warnings by some British generals, Gen Eisenhower visited Maj Gen Fredendall's headquarters on February 13, 1943, but did not relieve him of command at that time.³⁷

Shortly after Gen Eisenhower's return to Algiers from the II Corps visit, the Germans attacked—the results were abysmal. Gen Eisenhower sent Maj Gen Harmon to survey the problems with II Corps and report back.³⁸ Maj Gen Harmon found great confusion at Fredendall's command post. Surprisingly, Maj Gen Fredendall willingly turned over the running of the battle to Maj Gen Harmon, who stabilized the situation. The incompetence exhibited by Fredendall and the mistakes made on the battlefield led to over 6,000 US soldiers killed or wounded. On March 5, 1943, Gen Eisenhower dismissed Maj Gen Fredendall and replaced him with Maj Gen Patton. According to Gen Eisenhower's letter to Gen Marshall, "[Maj Gen Fredendall] under conditions of fighting . . . displayed particular weakness. Fredendall had no ability, under such conditions."³⁹ Generals Patton, Bradley, and others later criticized Gen Eisenhower for

his failure to take earlier action to remove with Maj Gen Fredendall from command, costing many lives on the battlefield.⁴⁰

Another type of command failure occurs when the military leader is relieved due to some failure in moral judgment. This may take the case of, financial or sexual improprieties. The latter was the case of General Kevin P. Byrnes, commander of the Army's Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), who was relieved because of an extra-marital affair with a senior government employee.⁴¹ General Byrnes had 36 years of military service and was ushering in systemic changes into the Army's doctrine and training for the post 9-11 world. Gen Schoomaker, Army's Chief of Staff, relieved Gen Byrnes for adultery and violation of Uniform Code of Military Justice.⁴² Relief of command is a huge consequence, but the Armed Services must hold their officers accountable for their conduct.

REASON #2: Irreconcilable Vision—Disconnected Senior Leader. As Dr. Peter Feaver described in his adaptation of Agency Theory, a senior military leader may differ in direction and vision with superior commander. Probably one of the best known cases is President Harry Truman's relief of General MacArthur during the Korean War.

Case Study #1: Relief of Gen Douglas MacArthur: Gen MacArthur, one of the longest serving general officers, was famous for brilliant operations like the landing at Inchon and his island hopping campaign from Australia to mainland Japan. While Gen MacArthur failed to anticipate Chinese intervention in the Korea War, he was not dismissed for this failure as this was an institutional failure. President Harry Truman relieved Gen MacArthur for insubordination and a divergent vision of the Korean War strategy.⁴³

Surprisingly, President Truman considered replacing Gen MacArthur at the urging of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles at the outset of the Korean War.⁴⁴ President Truman realized that he had no alternative but to stick with Gen MacArthur who was a military hero and politically powerful. In the face of Republican opposition, relief would have been politically untenable for President Truman. The disagreement between President Truman and Gen MacArthur began with the availability of 33,000 Nationalist Chinese troops in Korea. MacArthur favored their use, but President Truman decided it was not wise, considering the action may have cost United Nation support for the operation.⁴⁵ Gen MacArthur's landing at Inchon on September 17, 1950 was astonishingly successful and, by September 27, UN forces had recaptured Seoul. The landing and subsequent operation had virtually destroyed the North Korean Army.

In light of this success, the question was "what to do next?" Gen MacArthur made it clear that he wanted to destroy all North Korea military forces and reunite the peninsula.⁴⁶ President Truman, concerned about Chinese or Soviet involvement and expansion of the war, placed a restriction on Gen MacArthur that he cease ground operations if the Chinese or Soviets entered the war.⁴⁷ Later that month, the Joint Chiefs of Staff told Gen MacArthur to submit his plans for operations north of the 38th parallel for JCS approval. Gen MacArthur considered this as unwarranted interference.⁴⁸ Gen MacArthur was further restricted by the President—he was prohibited from pursuing aircraft into Chinese airspace, bombing hydro electric plants, or attacking cities near the border.⁴⁹ To clear the air and satisfy political pressure from the far right, President Truman decided to meet with Gen MacArthur. The general stated he could not leave the war and travel to Washington, DC and thus the President

traveled to Wake Island on October 15, 1950. At this meeting, Gen Mac-Arthur explained his strategy and assured the President that the Chinese would not intervene.⁵⁰

The Chiefs felt uncomfortable as Gen MacArthur launched a major offensive taking Pyongyang and then driving towards the Chinese border. The JCS advised Gen MacArthur that only Korean forces could approach the Chinese border. However, they were dealing with a powerful general and national hero who challenged their authority. On November 6, Gen MacArthur ordered his air force to bomb the bridges across the Yalu River to block the Chinese troops. The JCS objected and President Truman issued the now famous authorization that Gen MacArthur could bomb only the Korean half of the bridge. Later than month, Gen MacArthur reiterated his request for Washington to accept the offer for troops from Chiang Kai-shek. Gen MacArthur grew increasingly concerned about JCS restrictions and his ability to stop the Chinese; he blamed Washington for hampering his operations.⁵¹

President Truman admonished General MacArthur for a letter to the Veterans of Foreign Wars stating how the US airpower could dominate Asia from a base in Formosa (Taiwan). Gen MacArthur later apologized to the President and promised that it would not occur again, but it did several times over the next month. President Truman eventually declared that all military and diplomats must cease direct communications with the press. Several other communications and a lack of additional troops further widened the rift between Washington and Gen MacArthur. Several interviews in March 1951, demonstrated Gen MacArthur's attempt to influence policy as he openly criticized President Truman's decision to stop the Eighth Army's advance at the thirty-eight parallel.⁵² Gen MacArthur had also written to Congressman Joe Martin, House

Republican leader stating that he was in disagreement with the President's war policy. When this letter was made public in early April 1951, the President relieved Gen MacArthur for insubordination. The series of events in total demonstrates a clear problem between the principal (President Truman) and the agent (Gen MacArthur). The senior military leader was clearly disconnected from his civilian leadership in Washington. General Bradley told the President that he was surprised Gen MacArthur was not fired two years earlier.⁵³ A case involving a 4-star Navy admiral nearly sixty-seven years later would demonstrate some similarity to Gen MacArthur's firing.

Case Study #2: Relief of Admiral Fox Fallon: Admiral Fox Fallon resigned in March 2008 as U.S. CENTCOM Commander over perceptions that he was at odds with the administration's policies concerning Iran and Iraq.⁵⁴ Admiral Fallon spent a decade as a four-star admiral commanding Pacific Command and then Central Command. Secretary Gates had hired Admiral Fallon as the first Navy Admiral to command Central Command, calling him one the most brilliant strategic minds in the military replacing General Abizaid in early 2007.

Strangely, the administration and Admiral Fallon were at odds over Middle East policy for nearly a year before he resigned.⁵⁵ Esquire magazine published an extensive profile on Admiral Fallon highlighting him as the man within the administration opposing war with Iran.⁵⁶ Newspaper articles in the Washington Post highlighted this apparent disagreement in Admiral Fallon's words and those of the presidential administration. "Fallon has previously made it clear he has differences with the Bush administration's foreign policy."⁵⁷ Admiral Fallon disagreed with the some in the administration over the approach with Iran, emphasizing diplomacy over conflict.⁵⁸ Admiral Fallon also

endorsed further troop withdrawals from Iraq and quietly opposed a long-term surge in Iraq because the decision tied down assets in Iraq making a comprehensive strategy for the Middle East difficult.⁵⁹ He also voiced his concern that the US had lost its focus on Afghanistan.⁶⁰

While the administration and Admiral Fallon did not differ in the objectives of the policy towards Iraq and Iran, they differed in their approach.⁶¹ The Esquire article highlighted comments the Admiral had made to the Arab television stations Al Jazeera, stating "This constant drumbeat of conflict . . . is not helpful and not useful. I expect there will be no war, and that is what we ought to be working for."⁶² Admiral Fallon was also criticized for telling Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak that the US would not attack Iran. This became a banner headline in the Egyptian Gazette and landed him in trouble with the White House.⁶³ CBS News also reported that the Vice President, Secretary of State, and National Security Advisor called and criticized Admiral Fallon after he had brought a reporter to a meeting in which the admiral had lectured Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki on the need for political reforms.⁶⁴ Additionally, White House officials were concerned about the friction between Admiral Fallon and General Petraeus, the US commander in Iraq.⁶⁵

Once made public, the Esquire interview and story, was the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back.⁶⁶ On March 12, 2006, only one week after the Esquire magazine article was discussed in the Washington Post, Admiral Fallon announced his resignation, calling reports of such disagreements an untenable "distraction."⁶⁷ His offer of resignation did not garnet any great effort by civilian leadership to persuade him to remain in command.⁶⁸ As with Gen MacArthur, several members of the political party

opposing the president were quick to praise Admiral Fallon and criticize the presidential administration.⁶⁹ Peter Feaver, a former member of the NSC staff, noted that while private policy debate is permissible, the public disagreement between Admiral Fallon and the President made it necessary for him to resign.⁷⁰ Admiral Fallon, a distinguished officer of 41 years, was clearly disconnected from his boss and many in the presidential administration.⁷¹

REASON #3: Failure to Achieve Desired Results (failure to learn and/or to adapt). As was the case with Admiral Fox Fallon, Secretary of Defense Gates has either fired, requested resignation, or replaced several General Officers in just the last two years. This should be of concern to military leadership and cause senior leaders to ask why the Secretary has deemed it necessary to take these actions. In each case, the cause of senior leader failure can be attributed, in part, to a failure to learn or to adapt.

Case Study #1: Walter Reed Army Hospital, Failure to Learn: In a period of just three weeks, the Secretary of the Army and two General Officers were fired over problems at Walter Reed Army Hospital. Army veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan were brought to Walter Reed to be treated for injuries and to recuperate. In February 2007, Anne Hull and Dana Priest, reporters for the Washington Post, published a series of articles documenting problems in soldiers' housing and the medical bureaucracy at Walter Reed hospital.⁷² The Washington Post provided the Army six days of advanced warning of much of the material in the article.⁷³ Unfortunately, the Army medical command had not learned how to handle negative press stories from prior experiences within the Department of Defense.

Major General George Weightman, Commander of Walter Reed, and the Army public affairs office attempted to use this advance information from the Washington Post to preempt the story. Unfortunately, Maj Gen Weightman and the Army violated “the first rule in dealing with a negative story, admit when you have made a mistake and tell the world what you are doing to correct it.”⁷⁴ The Army’s preemptive briefing, attempting to manipulate the media backfired and spurred other publications to carry the story nationally, drawing further attention to a negative story.⁷⁵ Attempting to correct factual errors and preparing for a briefing after the publication of the negative news story is both the ethical and pragmatically prudent course of action. Army Secretary Francis Harvey toured the building and noted “a failure . . . in garrison leadership.”⁷⁶ Lt Gen Kiley also stated that the problems found at Walter Reed “weren’t serious and there weren’t a lot of them.”⁷⁷ Thus, he violated another key rule in public relations disaster, “don’t try to deny the obvious.”⁷⁸ After a visit to Walter Reed, Defense Secretary Robert Gates promised that those responsible for the problems at Walter Reed would be “held accountable.”⁷⁹

On March 1, pressure was reaching a climax and Army Secretary Francis Harvey relieved Maj Gen Weightman due to inadequate treatment of wounded soldiers.⁸⁰ In comments following Gen Weightman’s dismissal, Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, stated “I will insist on swift and direct corrective action and, where appropriate, accountability up the chain of command.”⁸¹ Lt Gen Kevin Kiley, Army Surgeon General, assumed command of Walter Reed upon Maj Gen Weightman’s dismissal.

Stories soon surfaced that many of the problems at Walter Reed actually grew under the previous commander, Lt Gen Kiley. Unfortunately, Secretary Harvey had

violated another key principle of leadership: “find out who is actually responsible before you start firing people.”⁸² Secretary Gates fired Secretary Harvey the next day, clearly showing he disagreed with the Secretary’s judgment and he felt the Army leadership was not taking the problems at Walter Reed serious enough. This perception may have been reinforced since Lt Gen Kiley had been “accused by critics of long knowing about the problems there and not improving outpatient care.”⁸³

On March 12, 2007, the day that the US Army released a report to Congress detailing more problems within the Army medical system, Lt Gen Kiley resigned.⁸⁴ Senator Claire McCaskill, stated she was pleased with Kiley's resignation, "It's been clear over the past several weeks that the culture of command that Lieutenant General Kiley established within the Army Medical Command led to many of the deficiencies at top Army medical facilities."⁸⁵ Two commanders and one Secretary were all relieved for failure to learn previous lessons about handling negative public relations. To some extent, Lt Gen Kiley’s comments in public indicated that he was disconnected from the Secretary of Defense and the importance the Secretary placed on caring for wounded soldiers. This lead to a well-publicized public relations disaster and caused the American people to lose faith, even if briefly, in the Army’s care for America’s military men and women.

Case Study #2: Operation Iraqi Freedom, Failure to Adapt: In a period of only four weeks, the US-led coalition had begun a war and penetrated Baghdad with the Thunder Runs—an amazing feat. Within weeks, most other strongholds would fall and on the deck of the USS Abraham Lincoln President Bush would declare “mission accomplished.”⁸⁶ The US led an impressive invasion that toppled Saddam Hussein’s

Baathist regime in a matter of weeks, yet the operation was unknowingly on the verge of failure in Iraq.

Unfortunately, the operation to take Baghdad was not followed by a coherent or well-resourced Phase IV (Stability and Reconstruction) plan. Previous CENTCOM plans had called for 380,000 troops for a post-war Iraq, yet the coalition only had 140,000 troops in place by mid-April.⁸⁷ The failure to adequately devote resources to post-conflict planning and operations resulted in disorder and then chaos that gripped Baghdad and other cities.⁸⁸ Iraq's infrastructure quickly collapsed and policies of extensive de-Baathification undermined the ability to rapidly erect the new government of Iraq.⁸⁹ The lack of preparation for Phase IV was a failure at so many levels — a systemic failure to anticipate throughout the Department of Defense.⁹⁰

Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez and Ambassador L. Paul Bremer assumed senior leadership in Iraq in from May-June 2003 until June 2004. This was one of the most critical periods of the postwar, which saw the killing of Uday and Qusay and the capture of Saddam Hussein. During this time, the insurgency grew and the abuses at Abu Ghraib prison were exposed while the government of Iraq was struggling from the de-Baathification policies.⁹¹ Concomitantly, there was significant disunity of leadership between Ambassador Bremer and Lt Gen Sanchez. "It was very clear they hated each other. They lived in the same palace and didn't talk to each other."⁹² This disunity in leadership from 2003 to 2004 was one reason for the major failures of postwar Iraq.

Postwar Iraq proved to be tremendously challenging as the US-led coalition attempted to establish security, build an Iraqi Army, effective infrastructure, and a viable government. Beginning in July 2004, much of this challenge fell upon General George

Casey and the Multi-National Forces Iraq (MNF-I).⁹³ Gen Casey and his staff created a coalition campaign strategy of “full spectrum counterinsurgency operations.”⁹⁴ MNF-I efforts also focused upon building the national government institutions and enabling the Iraqi election in January 2005. The coalition hoped a freely elected government would undercut the insurgents’ claims and lead to a reduced level of violence, but the Iraqi nation did not enjoy prosperity or security.⁹⁵ Many of the Sunni Arabs felt threatened by the new political system in which they were quickly losing their historical control over Iraq, and opted not to vote in the national elections.⁹⁶ While the elections established a freely elected government, it did not have sufficient voice of the Sunni minority.⁹⁷

Sunnis and Shia militia were soon in the midst of an insurgency against the Iraqi government.⁹⁸ As the Army decreased its presence, Islamic extremists identified this as a weak point. By mid-2005, the extremists had intimidated the locals in northern Iraq with terror tactics, effectively controlling many cities.⁹⁹ The strategy to build the Iraqi Army and transition to the Iraqi control was not working, violence and unrest was mounting in Iraq. By design, the MNF-I plan was not focused upon winning the counterinsurgency fight, which is often a long process; it was a plan to transfer the fight to the Iraqis and withdraw American forces. While Central Command and the Department of Defense agreed with the plan, the US leadership in Iraq did not realize the environment had changed and its strategy was failing.

Military operations focused upon defeating the Sunni insurgency in the cities and insurgent safe havens of Samarra and Fallujah. In retrospect, the military approach appeared to focus upon kinetically defeating the Sunni insurgency without fully addressing the underlying Sunni concerns in an effective political process.¹⁰⁰ The Army

was slow to adapt in Iraq, their efforts were not sufficient or effective to provide security and counter the growing insurgency.¹⁰¹ As Lt Gen Peter Chiarelli noted, the challenge was to secure Iraq before the “political clock ran out” on the effort.¹⁰² In Lieutenant Colonel Paul Yingling’s critique, “America’s generals failed to adapt to the demands of counterinsurgency. Counterinsurgency theory prescribes providing continuous security to the population. However, for most of the war American forces in Iraq have been concentrated on large forward-operating bases, isolated from the Iraqi people and focused on capturing or killing insurgents.”¹⁰³ US leadership had not sufficiently learned the lessons of previous counterinsurgency campaigns and failed to adapt and place soldiers in outposts amongst the Iraqi citizens. Despite the MNF-I focus upon drawing down the US presence in Iraq, a Colonel with a doctorate degree and a book about Vietnam to his credit was taking a different approach.

Near Tal Afar, Colonel H.R. McMaster took a new approach to the counter insurgency. Col McMaster instructed his soldiers to treat Iraqis with dignity and respect. He did not tolerate any abusive behavior.¹⁰⁴ Col McMaster also met with sheikhs and clerics who had ties to the insurgency and apologized for past American mistakes.¹⁰⁵ Col McMaster worked closely with one of his squadron commanders, Lieutenant Colonel Chris Hickey, and created a plan to establish outposts and conduct a classic counter insurgency operation.¹⁰⁶

Instead of staging patrols from a big base outside the city, Col McMaster moved his soldiers within the population. He established 29 outposts throughout the neighborhoods. This was the first large-scale model counterinsurgency campaign of the war.¹⁰⁷ Unfortunately, these examples were not adopted by other commanders, likely

because they were at odds with Gen Casey and Gen Abizaid's strategy. As Tom Ricks stated, Gen Casey was, "Working on the theory that the US military presence was an irritant to Iraqi society, the generals were trying to oversee a transition to Iraqi forces and so wanted an ever-shrinking American 'footprint.'" ¹⁰⁸ With an Iraqi Army and government unable to provide security to an ever-more violent Iraq, the MNF-I strategy to transition to Iraqi forces was failing. "By contrast, McMaster injected thousands of US troops into the middle of a city, implicitly saying that they were not the problem but part of the solution." ¹⁰⁹ Regrettably, Gen Casey had not recognized the need for a full counterinsurgency campaign in Iraq and the US forces failed to adapt. Gen Keane during a visit to the US embassy, Baghdad noted, "There was a sense of hopelessness and futility [amongst the soldiers]." ¹¹⁰

The *Together Forward* campaign in 2006, while well intentioned, appeared heavily focused upon clearing operations by force without a long term solution to prevent the insurgents from retaking the neighborhoods. ¹¹¹ When troops pulled out of the Baghdad neighborhoods, Sunni insurgents and Jaish al-Mahdi (JAM) militia filled the vacuum. ¹¹² The plan, according to the Iraq Study Group, failed to increase security in the capital. ¹¹³ The Iraq Study Group led by James Baker and Lee Hamilton went further, stating "there are neither enough U.S. troops present nor enough support from Iraqi security forces to "hold" neighborhoods so cleared . . . because none of the operations conducted by U.S. and Iraqi military forces are fundamentally changing the conditions encouraging the sectarian violence, U.S. forces seem to be caught in a mission that has no foreseeable end." ¹¹⁴ Additionally, the two Iraqi brigades promised for the *Together Forward* operation never materialized. ¹¹⁵ *Together Forward* was failing

to win support of the silent majority of Iraqis who desired security, jobs, and the basic necessities of life.

The insurgent attacks and loss of life continued to increase throughout 2006 indicating that the current strategy was not effective. Others, like Lt Gen Chiarelli, Commander of Multi-National Corps-Iraq (MNC-I) began to tell Gen Casey that the current approach was not working, “The conditions that we predicted are not the conditions that we have in place.”¹¹⁶ Gen Casey was determined that drawing down US troops would force the Iraqi army to take the lead and Iraqi politicians to reconcile their differences and reign in the Shia militias.¹¹⁷ Once again, those results were not materializing. Gen Casey’s “train and leave” strategy was failing. In effect, Gen Casey and MNF-I failed to fully understand the environment and to adapt quickly enough (on a local level) to the evolving situation within Iraq.¹¹⁸

In the summer of 2006, success in Iraq appeared unattainable as sectarian conflict and violence in Baghdad grew.¹¹⁹ President Bush grew increasingly concerned. The rise in violence in Iraq indicated to the President that he needed to do something different.¹²⁰ President Bush hoped that the military would propose a surge on its own, but that didn’t happen.¹²¹ Facing an increasingly difficult war and rising casualties, the President’s advisors, began to search for alternate strategies. In a meeting with the President, Dr. Eliot Cohen told the president that was not holding his generals accountable.¹²² The president was too focused upon them being “good guys” instead of the fact that they were not producing results.¹²³ The President wanted to win in Iraq and feared the strain that a defeat in Iraq would have on America and its armed forces while Gen Casey was focused upon transitioning the war to the Iraqis and leaving.¹²⁴

Lamentably, *Together Forward* not didn't work, "it backfired on Gen Casey, because it undercut the confidence of Bush administration officials in his ability to deliver."¹²⁵ Gen Casey was, in effect, becoming disconnected from the President's overwhelming desire to win in Iraq.

To chart a new course and enact change quickly, President Bush decided to change the leadership. He replaced Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad and Gen George Casey with Ambassador Ryan Crocker and Gen David Petraeus in February/March 2007. President Bush also replaced the CENTCOM commander, Gen Abizaid with Admiral Fallon, and Secretary Rumsfeld was replaced by Secretary Robert Gates a member o f the Iraq Study Group who also supported the surge strategy—a dramatic change in leadership that produced impressive results.

General Keane recommended a very able commander with an acute determination to win, General David Petraeus. Gen Petraeus had spent two tours in Iraq and had recently rewritten the Army's counterinsurgency manual and was also known for his ability to adapt organizations. He, along with others created what became known as the "Iraq Surge," requesting and receiving five more battalions in Iraq. With Lt Gen Odierno, he quickly recognized the successful efforts of Col Sean MacFarland who had learned the methods used by Col McMaster in Tal Afar and adapted them to quell the insurgency within Ramadi and facilitate the Sunni Awakening in Ramadi.¹²⁶

During 2007, Gen Petraeus and Lt Gen Odierno worked quickly to adapt these efforts throughout Iraq. Security at the tactical level in neighborhoods, towns, and villages effectively enabled reform at the political/strategic level. Gen Petraeus coupled with a very dynamic Ambassador Ryan Crocker created a unified strategy for Iraq.

They began the difficult process to push Prime Minister Maliki for reforms at the national level while the coalition forces established security at the local level. The change in strategy to the “Iraq Surge” was long overdue. Previous efforts demonstrated a failure to learn the lessons of counterinsurgency and a failure to adapt to a changing environment. Some heroic efforts by Col McMaster and Col McFarland demonstrated effective counterinsurgency warfare applied to Iraq. Gen Petraeus recognized the effectiveness of this new strategy and applied this change throughout Iraq.

Case Study #3: “Loose Nukes,” A Failure to Learn: Two nuclear-related incidents occurred in 2006 and 2007 which highlighted significant “leadership failures associated with the control of nuclear weapons and equipment” within the United States Air Force.¹²⁷ The failures represent failures to learn from a rich history of nuclear operations under Strategic Air Command and Strategic Command. These incidents also represent a failure of the USAF as an institution to anticipate the insidious, yet dramatic effect on readiness caused by a declining nuclear force structure, training, and modernization.

Both of these incidents garnered considerable press coverage and tarnished the image of the USAF. The first incident involved the unauthorized weapons transfer of six Advance Cruise Missiles (ACMs) with intact nuclear warheads from Minot Air Force Base (AFB) to Barksdale AFB in August 2007.¹²⁸ In effect, the USAF lost positive control of six nuclear warheads for the first time in its 60-year history! The incident was so serious that the President and Secretary of Defense were immediately informed.¹²⁹ Fortunately, the problem was recognized and the warheads were properly secured. This breakdown in previously well-established “accounting, issuing, loading, and

verification procedures” was shocking to the United States Air Force, its civilian leadership, and the American public.¹³⁰

The Minot-Barksdale incident presents failure to learn from the past and the struggles required to get to the level of nuclear excellence observed during the 1960s through the 1980s. The nascent USAF struggled and made many mistakes as it created Strategic Air Command (SAC). Gen Kenney, of WWII fame in the Pacific, was in effect fired (replaced) because he was not able to produce a nuclear force with the required capabilities. It took a very determined and creative leader, General Curtis LeMay, to build SAC into the dependable nuclear force of legend. Gen LeMay was famous for his demanding perfection with his no-notice inspections and rigorous training programs for aircrews. He both fired leaders on the spot for failures, as well as instituted spot promotions and designations of “select” aircrews as reward for success.¹³¹ The USAF had a rich history of establishing and maintaining a nuclear-ready force with strict discipline to positively control nuclear weapons. Unfortunately, the USAF and its leadership failed to learn from its own rich lessons of the past as it deemphasized nuclear operations.

The USAF’s second nuclear incident involved the shipment of four Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) electrical nose-cone fuses to Taiwan. These events highlighted significant deficiencies in supply chain accountability and handling of critical nuclear weapons components.¹³² The incidents at Minot-Barksdale and Taiwan highlighted significant erosion of USAF discipline, expertise, and indicate a failure in strategic leadership.¹³³ The challenge for civilian and military leaders within the Department of Defense was to understand why these errors occurred, quickly correct

problems, and work to restore faith and confidence in American's nuclear deterrent capability.

Upon investigation, it became clear that significant changes in the international environment and perceived threats led to the decreasing focus and emphasis on the nuclear mission.¹³⁴ The end of the Cold War, signified by the fall of the Berlin Wall and nuclear bombers coming off nuclear alert, indicated a significant change in the world's geo-political balance of power. The USAF mission focused upon supporting theater commanders at a time of significant resource constraints across the Department of Defense.¹³⁵ To better accomplish this mission, the USAF deactivated Strategic Air Command, splitting its strategic nuclear forces into Air Combat Command and Air Mobility Command (and later AF Space Command). The unintended consequence was a fragmentation of the nuclear mission and a decreased national emphasis on nuclear weapons, in large part, due to the perception of a diminished threat from the former USSR.

Nuclear expertise eroded as commanders spent less training time on nuclear operations proficiency. As the Department of Defense report noted, "Moreover, as the size of the nuclear arsenal was reduced and emphasis shifted to conventional missions, the Air Force failed to articulate the continuing value of the nuclear deterrent."¹³⁶ The nuclear mission appeared to be an ever-decreasingly relevant mission. Emphasis and institutional rewards clearly shifted to proficiency in conventional operations, particularly with the advent of new smart, precise GPS-guided weapons.¹³⁷ While the strategic environment had indeed changed, a series of Air Force leaders failed to anticipate the

need to provide emphasis and resources to maintain the capability and culture to preserve the nuclear mission.

The USAF's own investigation into the B-52 incident in 2007 led to the disciplining of approximately 65 personnel, including several commanders at the rank of Colonel and Lieutenant Colonel.¹³⁸ Raising concerns that USAF leadership may have limited blame primarily to midlevel officers, the Secretary of Defense asked retired USAF General Larry Welch (previous CSAF and commander of Strategic Air Command) to conduct a larger review of procedures and policies regarding the handling of nuclear weapons. General Welch indicated that the decline in nuclear mission focus was "more pronounced than realized and too extreme to be acceptable." He also noted, "Military units responsible for handling the bombs are not properly inspected and, as a result, may not be ready to perform their missions."¹³⁹ The culture of accountability and rigorous self-assessment required to handle nuclear weapons had eroded.

Secretary Gates also asked Admiral Donald (previously Director, Naval Nuclear Propulsion) to investigate the Taiwan incident. In late May 2008, Admiral Donald's report indicated systemic and cultural problems in the Taiwan incident similar to the Minot-Barksdale B-52 incident—"the gradual erosion of nuclear standards and a lack of effective oversight by Air Force leadership."¹⁴⁰ Secretary Gates further believed that "the Air Force had not been sufficiently critical of its past performance."¹⁴¹ These two factors indicated a failure in strategic leadership, leading Secretary Gates to ask for the resignation of the CSAF and SECAF on June 5, 2008—an action unprecedented in United States military history.

While the leadership failure is in essence the culmination of several Chiefs of Staff and Air Force Secretaries, Chief Moseley and Secretary Wynne were held accountable. The other factor mentioned in several news articles leading up to the firing was a senior leader disconnect between the USAF and the Secretary of Defense. They had differing visions of force requirements (e.g., F-22, Unmanned Aerial Surveillance) that occasionally surfaced in public forums. The senior leader disconnect came to light most vividly with the speech the SECDEF made at Maxwell Air Force Base.¹⁴² Secretary Gates later made other statements which attempted to place his comments in context and expressed that he was not angry with the people in the USAF. His comments at the Air University indicated he was not happy with the performance and direction of the USAF. The failure to fix the nuclear problem rapidly enough was the last straw on the proverbial camel's back. Arguably, a senior leader disconnect contributed significantly to firing of the USAF Chief of Staff.

Lessons To Learn

What can we learn from the of these leaders mistakes to prevent leadership failures and have a greater likelihood to achieve success? The framework can provide some useful insights:

REASON #1: Incompetence or Moral Failure

REASON #2: Irreconcilable Vision--the Disconnected Senior Leader

REASON #3: Failure to achieve desired results (failure to learn or adapt)

The framework does not judge the value of the person; rather it attempts provides insight into their success or failure. The essence of success and failure is both direct and indirect. The senior leader is directly responsible for his actions to ensure he

operates within the law (moral behavior), is competent, and is synchronized with his boss' (or bosses') vision. Indirectly, the senior leader establishes a command climate that enables the organization to learn and adapt.

The first two reasons represent personal behavior that is within the senior leader's ability to control. Failure due to incompetence is rare, especially amongst senior leaders. Senior leaders must have the energy and passion to learn and to be competent professionals in their field. By institutional design, the process of becoming a senior leader within today's military weeds out the incompetent and promotes the best and the brightest in their field. To some degree, incompetence is in the eye of the beholder and may be the result of differing views of the environment and actually may have more in common with a failure to achieve desired results or having a different vision from your boss. If a leader is weak in one area, he (or his boss) may surround him with a deputy that is particularly strong in the senior leader's area of weakness, thus creating a strong leadership team.

Rules of conduct within the military and most organizations are clear, but moral failure does happen occasionally even with senior leaders. Thus, these mistakes or moral failures are a matter of personal choice. Senior leaders who cannot follow the rules of conduct of their own organization set a poor example for others to follow. If a senior leader recognizes incompetence or moral failure in a commander, he should remove that individual from command sooner rather than later.¹⁴³

A senior leader with a vision that differs significantly from his boss can also meet with failure and likely removal from command. As described in Peter Feaver's application of Agency Theory, having a different vision is a matter of degree and to

some extent is not inherently unacceptable. As long as the boss is sufficiently satisfied with the outcome, he may provide the senior leader with significant latitude. The challenge is for leaders to realize when they are disconnected. In General Casey's situation, the strategy had an explicit goal of training Iraqis and expeditiously handing over control of Iraq to Iraqis. Little did he know that the administration and several influential advisors were becoming increasingly concerned about the rising death toll of US military and Iraqi civilians, as well as the increasing ineffectiveness of US forces in Iraq.

Good communications and a strong relationship between the senior leader and his immediate bosses is the key to early awareness of being disconnected. The senior leader also needs a dynamic team of trusted advisors who are willing to communicate difficult news. This team can be a trusted deputy, an external peer, or a commander's advisory group. A sharp, well-connected staff, loyal to their senior leader is extremely valuable. These trusted agents may become aware of a diverging vision between the staffs before their commanders. The senior leader, however, must also welcome forthright, difficult news from their staffs. General Petraeus is well known for building a competitive team of highly educated and successful officers that challenge his ideas.¹⁴⁴

When the senior leader realizes he has a different vision from his boss, he can attempt to persuade his boss to alter his vision. If the boss's does not change his vision, the senior leader has three possible decisions. First, he can obviously abandon his own vision and follow his boss' vision. Second, he can quietly shirk his boss' vision to some degree and work his own agenda, but he does so at risk that his boss will discover his actions and take disciplinary action—the senior leader effectively becomes

intentionally disconnected from his boss. As with the cases of General MacArthur or Admiral Fallon, openly voicing concerns contrary to the boss's vision can result in quick removal from command, disciplinary action, and termination from service. Finally, the senior leader can decide not to pursue the boss' vision, instead choosing to leave the position or retire. Regardless, the choice is rarely easy. In these case studies, the most common reason for firing or being replaced was a "disconnect" between the senior leader and his boss.

While moral failure, incompetence, and senior leader disconnect are clear personal choices made by the senior leader, a failure to achieve mission success is often more challenging and requires a more subtle and critical important aspect of leadership. Senior leaders must create an environment that fosters learning and adapting (innovation) from the most senior levels all the way down to the lowest levels of the organization. In previous wars of the 20th Century, this ability of the US military members to learn, adapt, and innovate came to be known as "Yankee ingenuity."

The senior leader must create a dynamic environment that fosters learning and adapting. One of the most critical aspects of creating an environment is forming a team, selecting subordinate commanders, and the staff. This team must become more than an extension of the commander's mind. Ideally, the team will help the commander think through strategies and plans, but also challenge the senior leader's ideas and present new and innovative ideas or plans for consideration. The commander's staff and immediate subordinates may recognize the environmental changes (and possibly a change in strategy) before the commander. As both Collins and Finkelstein highlight, this requires the senior leader to surround themselves with smart people whom they

trust. Jim Collins in *Good to Great* stated the most critical factor in ensuring success is “the ability to get and keep enough of the right people.”¹⁴⁵ Thus, a senior leader’s most important decisions involve picking his immediate staff and subordinate commanders, his team. The staff and subordinates should focus upon enabling the commander and the organization to effectively accomplish the mission.¹⁴⁶ The senior leader must trust the team and be open to new ideas and invite the staff to challenge his ideas.¹⁴⁷

The successful senior leader must instill in himself and his staff an incessant hunger to learn. The commander and his staff must draw upon history, not to search for the exact problem and solution in past, but to learn as Eliot Cohen says, to be a “detective”—in effect, a critical and creative thinker based upon the study of history.¹⁴⁸ The senior commander and the entire organization can learn from the successes and mistakes of others, to help frame new and unfamiliar problems.¹⁴⁹ This includes other divisions, corps, wings, allies, and coalition partners. As Secretary of the Navy, John Lehman would say, the answers will not be found in a book of instructions, but in the creative mind of the senior commander and his organization.¹⁵⁰ Historical study enables senior leaders to learn what questions to ask and how to prevent catastrophic failure.

The US Navy could have learned from the British experience to provide greater protection of shipping off the US coast during early days of World War II. We could have learned from our Vietnam experience to not confuse inputs with outputs in our measure of success. In Vietnam, the measure of success was number of bombs dropped and enemy killed (the input) instead of measuring the output, the security of the population, small business growth, population’s trust of the government. The US military would make many of the same strategic and operational mistakes in OIF,

measuring success by the numbers of patrols conducted, number of Iraqi troops trained, and the number of areas handed over from US to Iraqi control—yet the number of Iraqi deaths increased and the insurgency was rapidly growing. Many soldiers returning to Iraq for the second and third time did learn how to interact with Iraqis. This learning gradually led to effective adaptation of counterinsurgency principles, with US troops working alongside Sunnis during the “awakening” in 2007-2008 in Iraq. As Field Marshall Rommel said in World War II of the Americans, “The Americans, it is fair to say, profited far more from the British in their experience in Africa.”¹⁵¹

The senior leader should encourage and reward new, innovative, and at times counter-cultural ideas. In essence, he must allow his soldiers to adapt and risk a chance of failure to achieve success. The senior leader must not rely upon his past success; rather he must always adapt and look for new approaches. Great leaders are not the ones who can predict the future, but are the leaders who create teams that learn and adapt rapidly to an uncertain environment.¹⁵² Senior leaders must allow their staffs and subordinate commanders to take smart risks and execute new ideas (adapting in the present), much like Colonels MacFarland and McMaster’s success in establishing outposts within Tal Afar and Ramadi, adapting counterinsurgency strategy to Iraq.¹⁵³ Then, he must be ready to recognize and reinforce success as Gen Petraeus did, duplicating the results from Ramadi. Finally, unwarranted self-confidence must be eliminated. He and his staff must be introspective and be alert for warning signs of strategic failure.

Success in modern war requires a keen ability to lead a large, complex military organization to tackle complex and often wicked problems. The commander will not be

able to solve each and every problem, but to achieve victory, he must instill in his personnel an attitude and ability to learn and adapt to an ever-changing environment. Failure to achieve results as a result of organizational failure was a necessary, but not sufficient condition for these leaders to be removed from their position. Only after these leaders became disconnected from their boss(es) and demonstrated their inability to propose and enact a new strategy (and the boss had a suitable replacement) were they relieved.

The toughest questions to answer are the counterfactual ones. What if we had chosen a different leader for OIF in 2004, a different Army Surgeon General or a different USAF Chief of Staff, would the outcomes have been different? We will never know the answer since the failures that occurred influenced the attitudes of leaders who took over and achieved success. How much are leaders responsible for the organization performance? Too often, we look at successful leaders without considering the context of the situation and factors that made them successful. Would they have been as successful (or at all) under different circumstances?

At a minimum, we know that senior leaders must avoid moral turpitudes, have sufficient drive to overcome gaps in knowledge and energy to compete (and win), and achieve a common vision with their boss. Even greater is the responsibility of the senior leader to enable his organization to learn and adapt. One of Gen Petraeus' great talents is being an adaptive learner who benefited from his prior experiences in Iraq and those of Lt Gen Sanchez and Gen Casey. Gen Petraeus may also be the most competitive man alive, without question, he wanted to win.¹⁵⁴ He encouraged his commanders to innovate and supported their efforts and rewarded innovation and

success. Since the future will be volatile and uncertain, the leader must encourage a culture of adaptation coupled with an insatiable drive to win—a culture of innovation.¹⁵⁵

Senior leaders and their soldiers, airmen, marines, and sailors are wise to learn from the mistakes of others and be prepared to adapt and innovate to achieve victory. As Field Marshall Sir William Slim said in Burma in 1942, “Remember the lessons to be learned from defeat—they are more than from victory.”¹⁵⁶

Endnotes

¹ One of the most famous books on defeat is Sir William Slim, *Defeat into Victory* (New York: David McKay, 1961).

² Antulio J. Echevarria II, “The Trouble with History” *Parameters* 35, No. 3 (Summer 2005), 81. “Historians write what they do based in part on the fragments of the past, but how they see those fragments is largely influenced by knowledge they have gained in the present, including the works of other historians who may indeed only be offering their best guesses as to what those fragments mean.” Military history once focused almost exclusively on military factors, overlooking the roles of culture, politics, and economics, for instance.

³ *Ibid.*, 85. “S. L. A. Marshall’s reports of combat actions in Korea were not based on his own eyewitness accounts, but derived mostly from selective interviews conducted after the fact; moreover, they were written not with accuracy in mind, but for the express purpose of creating a dramatic effect.”

⁴ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁶ Eliot A. Cohen and John Gooch, *Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War* (New York: The Free Press, 1990), 7.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁹ Cohen uses an excellent example of Admiral Kimmel who was held responsible for being ill prepared for the attack at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Yet, investigations showed that many factors contributed to include senior levels in DC, intelligence failures, failure to interpret a new technology called RADAR. Additionally, there were some warnings to reflect the breakdown in negotiations between the Japan and America. In the end, Admiral Kimmel was held to account for a failure to anticipate an attack. Even a modest measure of readiness or alter could have altered the outcome and tremendous loss of life on December 7. Cohen also

points to politicians having no choice but replacing the military commander, thus creating a scapegoat. Cohen, *Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War*, 32.

¹⁰ Cohen, *Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War*, 32.

¹¹ Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 249.

¹² Cohen, *Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War*, 24.

¹³ Sydney Finkelstein, *Why Smart Executives Fail: And What You Can Learn from Their Mistakes* (New York, NY: Penguin Group, 2003).

¹⁴ A detailed and expanded version can be found in Finkelstein, *Why Smart Executives Fail: And What You Can Learn from Their Mistakes*, 2-8.

¹⁵ Another way to state the problem is that executives had the right policies, but managers at lower levels just failed to carry them out.

¹⁶ Cohen, *Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War*, 6-23.

¹⁷ Finkelstein, *Why Smart Executives Fail: And What You Can Learn from Their Mistakes*, 213-237. Dr. Finkelstein explores all of these reasons via colorful examples throughout the book. He summarizes many of the common reasons on pages 213-237. Item #7: Often a leader or executive will have a defining moment in their career that has brought them significant success. A leader may attempt to apply the lessons learned from this defining moment to other situations in his or her career. While this can bring further success, it can also bring potential failure if the problem and assumed solution are mismatched.

¹⁸ Cohen, *Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War*, 20.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 25. This leads the author to believe that the organizational climate established by the commander is critical. An organizational climate that encourages dynamic thinking, diverse opinions, and welcomes dissenting viewpoints may prevent the collective mind from singular thinking. This ensures that organizations do not repeat mistakes, recognize asymmetric enemy attacks, and ill-fated strategy and operations and thus prevent us from “getting it too wrong.”

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 62.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² The Army War College terms this VUCA, an acronym used to describe or reflect on the volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity of general conditions and situations.

²³ Cohen, *Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War*, 161.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 13. Cohen goes on to present another excellent example of a failure to adapt in the British expedition to take Gallipoli in August 1915. See Cohen pages, 133-163.

²⁶ Not everything can be anticipated, especially a surprise attack. The failure to anticipate is a failure to take reasonable precautions against a known hazard.

²⁷ Cohen, *Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War*, 6.

²⁸ Ibid., 6-8.

²⁹ Ibid., 31. See also Dale R. Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency* (Lawrence, KS: Kansas University Press, 2005), 52.

³⁰ Even though the failure may not be the result of the one leader in command at the time of failure, regardless the leader may be held responsible and relieved.

³¹ Peter Feaver has written extensively about Principal-Agent theory and the military. A thesis by Major Gilbert Petrina, 2005 also explains a bit more nuanced of Principal-Agent theory to the military. Gilbert Petrina, *An Agency Theory View of the Military Advisor* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University, 2005).

³² Peter Feaver, *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 57. In this case, the agent fails to accept and perform the task.

³³ Ibid., 58.

³⁴ One other explanation this is worth exploring is Graham Allison's three models in his now classic book, *Essence of Decision*. Allison explores three models to explain organizational decision making and behavior. Model I: Rational Actor model; Model II: Bureaucratic or Organizational Process model; Model III: Government-Politics model (bureaucratic power). While these three models do provide some insight into decision making, it doesn't fully address the leader's role and responsibility in the decision making process. If used, the Allison model should be combined with the perspective of Dr. Feaver's Agency Theory. Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: Longman, 1999), 13-76, 143-196, and 255-294.

³⁵ Dwight D. Eisenhower, *The Papers of Dwight D. Eisenhower, Vol. 2* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins, 1970), 986. See General Eisenhower's Command philosophy in his letter to General Gerow (February 24, 1943). Gen Marshall was also known to have relieved many General Officers for poor performance.

³⁶ Carol D'Este, *Eisenhower: A Soldier's Life* (New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company, 2002), 391. Chapter 33, "Ikus Africanus" describes General Eisenhower's challenges during the African campaign.

³⁷ Ibid., 394-395.

³⁸ Ibid., 396-397.

³⁹ Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Eisenhower's War Time Papers*, Volume II, p 1101. General Dwight D. Eisenhower's letter to General George Marshall, 24 April 1943.

⁴⁰ D'Este, *Eisenhower: A Soldier's Life* 397-398. While Maj Gen Fredendall's incompetence was noticed several weeks prior and during battle, it oddly took Gen Eisenhower quite some time to relieve Fredendall. Generals Patton, Bradley and others later criticized Gen Eisenhower for his failure to take earlier decisive action.

⁴¹ Josh White, "4-Star General Relieved of Duty," *Washington Post*, August 10, 2005, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/08/09/AR2005080900515.html> (accessed March 23, 2009).

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Dale R. Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency* (Lawrence, KS: Kansas University Press, 2005), 52.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 74.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 75.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 76.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 77.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., 79.

⁵² Ibid., 81.

⁵³ Ibid., 82.

⁵⁴ Charlie Rose, "A Conversation with Admiral William J. Fallon" July 28, 2008, <http://www.charlierose.com/view/interview/9191> (accessed March 20, 2009).

⁵⁵ Thom Shanker, "Mideast Commander Retires After Irking Bosses," *The New York Times*, March 12, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/12/washington/12military.html> (accessed March 20, 2009)..

⁵⁶ Thomas P.M. Barnett, "The Man Between War and Peace," *Esquire* (April 2008), 144. <http://www.esquire.com/features/fox-fallon> (accessed March 20, 2009).

⁵⁷ Thomas E. Ricks, "Commander Rejects Article of Praise" *Washington Post*, March 6, 2008. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/03/05/AR2008030503059.html> (accessed March 20, 2009).

⁵⁸ Shanker, "Mideast Commander Retires After Irking Bosses."

⁵⁹ Barnett, "The Man Between War and Peace."

⁶⁰ Shanker, "Mideast Commander Retires After Irking Bosses." Admiral Fallon's concerns about losing focus on Afghanistan were well placed and were expressed in 2009 by President Obama. Some White House aides under President Bush were reported to be unhappy with Admiral Fallon's decision to dump "long war" phrase used to describe efforts against terrorism.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Barnett, "The Man Between War and Peace."

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ "Top U.S. Commander in Mideast Quits: Admiral William Fallon Resigns; Fallon Reportedly Differed With White House on Iran Policy," *CBS News*, March 11, 2008. <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2008/03/11/national/main3926955.shtml> (accessed March 20, 2009).

⁶⁵ Ricks, "Commander Rejects Article of Praise".

⁶⁶ Admiral Fallon's circumstance had some odd characteristics in common of General MacArthur's letter leaking to the press. Both men, in effect disagreed publically with the presidential administration.

⁶⁷ Thomas E. Ricks, "Top U.S. Officer in Mideast Resigns" *Washington Post*, March 12, 2008. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/story/2008/03/11/ST2008031102008.html?sid=ST2008031102008> (accessed March 20, 2009).

⁶⁸ Shanker, "Mideast Commander Retires After Irking Bosses."

⁶⁹ Ricks, "Top U.S. Officer in Mideast Resigns."

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Robert L Bateman, "Cause for Relief: Why presidents no longer fire generals," *Armed Forces Journal* (June 2008), 14-15.

⁷² Anne Hull and Dana Priest, "Soldiers face Neglect, Frustration at Army's Top Medical Facility." *Washington Post Magazine*, February 18, 2007.

⁷³ James T. Currie, "Will the Army Ever Learn Good Media Relations Techniques? Walter Reed as a Case Study," *Military Review* 88, no. 3, (May-June 2008), 93.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 93.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 94.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 94-95.

⁷⁷ Dana Milbank, "Painting Over the Problems at Walter Reed's Building 18," *The Washington Post*, February 23, 2007, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/02/22/AR2007022201878_pf.html (accessed March 20, 2009).

⁷⁸ Currie, "Will the Army Ever Learn Good Media Relations Techniques? Walter Reed as a Case Study," 95.

⁷⁹ "Walter Reed medical chief relieved of command, General's dismissal follows reports on poor treatment of wounded soldiers" *Associated Press*, March 1, 2007, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/17402872/> (accessed March 20, 2009).

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ John Hendren, "Walter Reed General Relieved of Command: Army Hospital Plagued by Allegations of Deficient Care and Living Conditions" *ABC News*, March 1, 2007, <http://abcnews.go.com/politics/Story?id=2915829&page=1> (accessed March 20, 2009).

⁸² Currie, "Will the Army Ever Learn Good Media Relations Techniques? Walter Reed as a Case Study," 96.

⁸³ Hendren, "Walter Reed General Relieved of Command: Army Hospital Plagued by Allegations of Deficient Care and Living Conditions."

⁸⁴ "Army Surgeon General Kiley Retires Amid Walter Reed Medical Center Furor," *Fox News*, March 12, 2007, <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,258321,00.html> (accessed March 20, 2009).

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Michael R. Gordon and General Bernard E. Trainor, *Cobra II* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 2006), 463. President Bush declared "Mission Accomplished" on May 1, 2003.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 138-139. General Shinseki put the estimate at a few hundred thousand during his testimony. Other estimates put the post-war troop requirements at 450,000 based upon the Kosovo model.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 158.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 464-465 and 476.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 156. Lt Col Paul Yingling notes the "inept planning for postwar Iraq took the crisis caused by a lack of troops and quickly transformed it into a debacle." Paul Yingling, "A failure in generalship," *Armed Forces Journal* (May 2007), 14-15.

⁹¹ Linda Robinson, *Tell Me How This Ends: General David Petraeus and the Search for a Way Out of Iraq* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2008), 3.

⁹² Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* (New York: Penguin Press, 2006), 324.

⁹³ Donald P. Wright and Timothy R. Reese, *On Point II* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2008), 42. Lt Gen Sanchez commanded MNF-I for just one month, being succeeded by Gen Casey on 1 July 2004.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 42.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 45.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 590.

⁹⁷ Robinson, *Tell Me How This Ends: General David Petraeus and the Search for a Way Out of Iraq*, 4 and 8.

⁹⁸ Wright, *On Point II*, 590.

⁹⁹ Thomas E. Ricks, "A Light in Ramadi," *Army Magazine* (March 2009), 55. This article is based upon Thomas Rick's book *The Gamble: General David Petraeus and The American Military Adventure in Iraq, 2006-2008* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2009), 60.

¹⁰⁰ To some degree, this may have been a failure to take a full spectrum approach from the political and strategic level through tactical level of war. This calls into question the effectiveness John Negroponte and Zalmay Khalilzad to achieve political reforms and how well integrated the political and military processes really were?

¹⁰¹ Wright, *On Point II*, 590.

¹⁰² Ricks, *Fiasco*, 428.

¹⁰³ Paul Yingling, "A failure in generalship," *Armed Forces Journal* (May 2007), 14-15. He goes on to say "Counterinsurgency theory requires strengthening the capability of host-nation institutions to provide security and other essential services to the population. America's generals treated efforts to create transition teams to develop local security forces and provincial reconstruction teams to improve essential services as afterthoughts, never providing the quantity or quality of personnel necessary for success."

¹⁰⁴ Ricks, "A Light in Ramadi," 55.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 55.

¹⁰⁶ Colonel Patrick Matlock, Battalion Commander (Iraq), interviewed by author, Carlisle, PA, March 19, 2008. Col Matlock described a very good after action briefing Lt Col Hickey gave shortly after his return Iraq to Col Matlock's brigade just prior to their deployment to Iraq. Col Matlock claims that Lt Col Hickey is too much of a professional to claim credit for his unit's success. Even if the idea originated from one or the other, I would guess that the success in Tal Afar (like anything else) was a combination of good (and imaginative) work by each of the echelons involved: regiment, squadron, troop, platoon, section, squad, team. In something like this, each of the leaders at these echelons really does create a unique concept nested within the mission and intent of the next higher commander. This is true even when there is a dominating framing concept such as the use of combat outposts to protect the population. Unfortunately, that dominating framing concept was not universally adopted until Gen Petraeus' recognition of these effective methods in 2007.

¹⁰⁷ Ricks, "A Light in Ramadi," 55.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Thomas E. Ricks, *The Gamble: General David Petraeus and The American Military Adventure in Iraq, 2006-2008* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2009), 11.

¹¹¹ Colonel Patrick Matlock, Battalion Commander (Iraq), interviewed by author, Carlisle, PA, March 19, 2008.

¹¹² Robinson, *Tell Me How This Ends: General David Petraeus and the Search for a Way Out of Iraq*, 16.

¹¹³ The Iraq Study Group, *The Iraq Study Group Report: The Way Forward — A New Approach* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006), 15. The Iraq Study Group included James A. Baker, III and Lee H. Hamilton, Co-Chairs. With Lawrence S. Eagleburger, Vernon E. Jordan, Jr., Edwin Meese III, Sandra Day O'Connor, Leon E. Panetta, William J. Perry, Charles S. Robb, Alan K. Simpson.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹¹⁵ Robinson, *Tell Me How This Ends: General David Petraeus and the Search for a Way Out of Iraq*, 16.

¹¹⁶ Lt Gen Peter Chiarelli as quoted by Robinson in *Tell Me How This Ends: General David Petraeus and the Search for a Way Out of Iraq*, 15-16 and 36-37.

¹¹⁷ Robinson, *Tell Me How This Ends: General David Petraeus and the Search for a Way Out of Iraq*, 16.

¹¹⁸ Gen Casey and the US Army appeared to become increasingly concerned with the war's effect on the all volunteer force. For Gen Casey, it appeared that he wrestled with an inability to sufficiently understand the environment. If he did understand the environment, then he did not have sufficient resources for the task.

¹¹⁹ Fred Barnes, "How Bush Decided on the Surge" *The Weekly Standard*, February 4, 2008. <http://www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/014/658dwgrn.asp?pg=1> (accessed March 20, 2009).

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² Ricks, *The Gamble*, 42-43. This is also supported by Fred Barnes' article, "How Bush Decided on the Surge."

¹²³ Robinson, *Tell Me How This Ends: General David Petraeus and the Search for a Way Out of Iraq*, 34.

¹²⁴ Barnes, "How Bush Decided on the Surge."

¹²⁵ Ricks, *The Gamble*, 50.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 72. See also page 50.

¹²⁷ Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, Remarks delivered to Airmen at Langley AFB, June 9, 2008. <http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1256> (accessed March 20, 2009).

¹²⁸ US Department of Defense, *Report of the Secretary of Defense Task Force on DoD Nuclear Weapons Management Phase I: The Air Force's Nuclear Mission* (Washington, DC: US Department of Defense, September 2008), 13. This report is sometimes referred to as the Schlesinger Report.

¹²⁹ KTBS (Shreveport, LA) and Associated Press news report, "Barksdale officer among those fired for nuclear-missile mistakes," October 19, 2008, <http://www.ktbs.com/news/Barksdale-officer-among-those-fired-for-nuclear-missile-mistakes-5785/> (accessed March 20, 2009).

¹³⁰ US Department of Defense, *Report of the Secretary of Defense Task Force on DoD Nuclear Weapons Management Phase I: The Air Force's Nuclear Mission*, 13.

¹³¹ Phillip S. Meilinger, *Airmen and Air Theory: A Review of the Sources* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 2001), 37-39 and 59-61.

¹³² US Department of Defense, *Report of the Secretary of Defense Task Force on DoD Nuclear Weapons Management Phase I: The Air Force's Nuclear Mission*, 13.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 17-18.

¹³⁵ The USAF supported Desert Shield and Desert Storm in 1990 and 1991, followed shortly thereafter by Operation Northern Watch (ONW) and Operation Southern Watch (OSW). Both operations strained USAF resources significantly in the 1990's era of decreasing defense budgets.

¹³⁶ US Department of Defense, *Report of the Secretary of Defense Task Force on DoD Nuclear Weapons Management Phase I*, 21.

¹³⁷ These are recollections from the author's experience in the 1990s-2000s flying two nuclear-capable aircraft (B-2 and B-52) at three wings (Minot, Barksdale, and Whiteman AFBs).

¹³⁸ Erik Holmes, "Minot bomb wing gets new commander Thursday," *Air Force Times*, October 30, 2007. http://www.airforcetimes.com/news/2007/10/airforce_minot_nuclear_071030/ (accessed March 20, 2009).

¹³⁹ "U.S. nuclear focus has dimmed, studies find," *Los Angeles Times*, February 13, 2008, <http://articles.latimes.com/2008/feb/13/nation/na-b52s13> (accessed March 20, 2009).

¹⁴⁰ Secretary Gates address to Airmen at Langley AFB.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, Secretary Gates Remarks at Maxwell-Gunter AFB, Montgomery, AL, April 21, 2008, <http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?>

transcriptid=4214. "Defense Secretary Gates Says Air Force Must Step Up Efforts in Iraq, Afghanistan," Fox News, April 21, 2008, [http://www.foxnews.com/story/ 0,2933,351964,00.html](http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,351964,00.html) (accessed March 20, 2009).

¹⁴³ Jim Collins, *Good to Great* (New York: Harper Collins, 2001), 63.

¹⁴⁴ See Linda Robinson's book, *Tell Me How This Ends: General David Petraeus and the Search for a Way Out of Iraq*, 111-112 (and other passages) for an extensive description of how Gen Petraeus built his team dynamic and intellectual team in Iraq.

¹⁴⁵ Collins, *Good to Great*, 54.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 45-48. Jim Collins highlights that it is not all about the CEO or Commander, the solitary genius that makes companies and the military successful. It's not a "genius with a thousand helpers." Rather, it is strong executive or command team that makes an organization great.

¹⁴⁷ Finkelstein, *Why Smart Executives Fail: And What You Can Learn from Their Mistakes*, 167-168.

¹⁴⁸ Cohen, *Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War*, 236-237.

¹⁴⁹ Finkelstein, *Why Smart Executives Fail: And What You Can Learn from Their Mistakes*, 275-279. Finkelstein describes in detail the importance of learning and open mindedness to the success of Great companies. He stresses how a successful leader is not the one who can predict the future, but the leader who creates a team that learns and adapts to an uncertain environment.

¹⁵⁰ John Lehman, *Command of the Seas* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1988), 21.

¹⁵¹ Cohen, *Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War*, 236.

¹⁵² Finkelstein, *Why Smart Executives Fail: And What You Can Learn from Their Mistakes*, 275-276.

¹⁵³ Ricks, *The Gamble*, 59-72.

¹⁵⁴ Author's interview with Colonel Fred Johnson, March 18, 2009. Col Johnson served as Deputy Battalion Commander in Baquba, Iraq for 15 months. This statement about General Petraeus' drive is also supported by comments in Linda Robinson's book *Tell Me How This Ends: General David Petraeus and the Search for a Way Out of Iraq*, 90.

¹⁵⁵ David A. Fastabend and Robert H. Simpson, "Adapt or Die," *Army Magazine* 54, No. 2 (February 2004), 16-17.

¹⁵⁶ William Slim, *Defeat into Victory* (New York: David McKay, 1961), 99.

